

IMAGES OF THE CHURCH IN 1 CORINTHIANS AND 1 TIMOTHY AN EXERCISE IN CANONICAL HERMENEUTICS

EUGENE E. LEMCIO

I. INTRODUCTION

It is my great pleasure to offer this essay in tribute to Professor Robert W. Lyon, my first teacher of New Testament exegesis and criticism at Asbury Theological Seminary. Although he set rigorous academic standards, our honoree always stressed the need for scholarly endeavor to serve the people of God within whose faith and life the documents originated. Therefore, churchman that he is, it is fitting that my subject should deal with some aspect of the Church's life and thought which are to be found in the NT. But Bob is a certain kind of churchman, believing that the people of God need to know how to hear and accommodate the loyal (might we say "loving"?) opposition within it. At its best, a conversation among multiple and diverse voices on the grand theme(s) of Scripture can move us closer to the ideal of the Church as *semper reformanda*. It is in this spirit that I offer this two-part thesis in commemoration of his retirement: (1) By approaching 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy via their dominating images of the Church as body and house(hold), one is thereby able to integrate (and not merely treat in no particular order or configuration) their primary themes or motifs, respectively. (2) These two distinct images (and the internally-integrated themes which they "control") are in "opposition" to each other in the sense that they resist the objectifying and absolutizing of one over the other: i.e., they protest the confusing of these or any other image with the single reality to which they join us.

On the way to developing these points further, a word needs to be said about definitions and rationales which should be kept in mind throughout.

1. I concur with those who see in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy two very different views of the Church and church life. Others might minimize the diversity. Since both, after all, do appear in the same Canon, they cannot be that far apart.

Eugene E. Lemcio is Professor of New Testament at Seattle Pacific University in Seattle, Washington.

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Obviously, enough of a similarity exists between them that permitted each to be included. In response, one may point to significant diversity among other NT writers. There is the multiple gospel corpus. The Synoptics differ among themselves according to the manner by which each evangelist adopts, adapts, and arranges his traditions. And there are the well-known contrasts between the Synoptics and John. Acts reports tensions in the early Church between non-hellenistic and hellenistic Jewish Christians (6:1-6) and between these and the Pauline Gentile mission (15:1-5). The Apostle in Galatians vividly recounts his "heart-to-heart" with Peter at Antioch (2:11-14). Furthermore, the Canon itself preserves the literary contributions of these disputants in the two epistolary corpora: Pauline and "general" or "catholic."¹

2. We have here at least a toleration, if not delight, in plurality and diversity. It is legitimated. The Bible itself tells us so. Consequently, whatever hermeneutical method is used to interpret the NT, it shall have to avoid harmonization, reduction to a common denominator, and preferential treatment of one document over another, and one theme above another. So it is, as Paul Minear observes, with images: "No writer makes any single image serve in a passage of any length as the only or sufficient analogy for the community of faith. There is, however, an equally significant corollary. If no figure dominates the stage, all figures gain in import by sharing that stage.² However, there are boundaries. Only this much variety is sanctioned. If there is deviation, it is "standard deviation."³

3. But why approach this study via "images" rather than through examining themes or *Leitmotifs*? The reason lies in part with my discontent with the way in which the latter kind of investigation usually emerges as "singular" and "horizontal" in character. Images, however, tend to organize **several** categories at first regarded as *separate* into a cluster or gestalt. My thinking first started moving in this direction as I began reading bumperstickers more carefully. There was a certain cohesiveness or integrity to the presence of these signs anticipating the 1984 presidential election: "Reagan-Bush," "Free Trade," "Nuclear Power," "Pro-Life," "Support the Right to Bear Arms." Likewise, the following constellation of stickers had its own integrity: "Mondale-Ferraro," "Fair Trade," "Solar Power," "Pro-Choice," "Support the Right to Arm Bears."

What is the "glue" which binds these slogans together? My claim is that controlling images (including verbal ones) help to envision or picture such a gestalt. This is clear when we observe how much of a community's *modus operandi* is determined by the symbols and metaphors that organize its complex of persons and policies.⁴ In the fairly recent past, small colleges and universities occasionally employed family language to describe the character of campus life. However, one may now find the president referred to as the CEO of a "management team" in a corporation having to pay attention to the "bottom line" and the "products" which one "delivers" to various "markets." This view of education as a business enterprise has profound and not-so-subtle effects on the concept of mission, curriculum development, faculty hiring and promotion, and student recruitment. So far as I Corinthians and I Timothy are concerned, I shall endeavor to show how the body language of the former and the house(hold) language of the latter account for and integrate several categories: Christology, faith, Pneumatology, church organization, leadership, class, women, and eschatology. In other words, I shall not be so much concerned with determining a singular meaning for "body" and "house(hold)" as I will with showing how they

work to give coherent shape to these internal “themes.”

4. Furthermore, I shall attempt to suggest how the diversity between these two images and the subjects which they “control” may function in an equally authoritative way to determine the “whole counsel of God.” The Canon itself, when viewed with sufficient comprehensiveness, can provide the clues. It conveys not only standard subject matter but also standard means of making it “work.” Four phenomena are crucial. (a) The Bible legitimizes multiple visions and expressions of the same reality. For example, the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants appear in both unconditional and conditional forms (Genesis 12 and 22, 2 Sam 7:14-16 (See Psalm 89) and 1 Kings 9, respectively). The role of human, ethical response in justification is conveyed variously in Galatians and James. (b) Scripture contains both a conservative and libertarian attitude towards tradition, seen most clearly in the gospel tradition. One is concerned to preserve and conserve. The other is to adapt and apply. (c) With multiple visions and a dual attitude to tradition, the authors themselves inform, confirm, and correct their readers, depending on the need. In other words, having argued for or assumed a foundation of thought and experience, writers either provide weal or pronounce woe, either console or condemn. (Or, more often, they do both, to one degree or another). (d) Documents possessing the qualities in (a)-(c) seem to have been selected for their capacity to transcend the original *Sitze im Leben* so as to “speak” to future generations in other times and places. Can we understand the role of the two letters in this light? My suggestion is that one of the canonical functions of Corinthians is to confirm the genius of all corinthian-like church situations and to criticize excesses or shortcomings of those of the timothean kind—and vice versa. In other words, readers in every age were intended to gaze into these full-length, 180-degree mirrors, reflecting the whole truth about themselves, “warts and all.” It remains for us to see which of the two images tends to govern and support a particular tradition in our own day and how each will convey bane or offer blessing (or both).⁵

5. In the process, it will be apparent that certain kinds of historical questions are out of place in such canonical (biblical theological) study.⁶ Whether or not Paul wrote 1 Timothy is not a criterion for making a value judgment for or against the views of the letter. Is it the historical authors of the NT who are authoritative, or is it the corpus of literature recognized as such by the Church? We do not have the option of preferring 1 Corinthians above 1 Timothy (or vice versa). So, the focus of attention is on exegeting the final form of the canonical text rather than on the historical reconstruction of each church’s beliefs based on information mined from the NT. Here we have a microcosm of the classical debate on the nature of biblical theology.

6. Ultimately, interpreters will have to consider more self-consciously the nature and role of image-symbol-metaphors in exegesis and hermeneutics. With apologies to Ogden Nash, one has to ask, “What’s a meta for?” As their etymology suggests, symbols act primarily as bridges, connectors ($\sigma\upsilon\nu\upsilon + \beta\alpha\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu =$ “throw together”) which “carry [us] across” ($\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha + \phi\epsilon\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$) from one understanding or experience to another (and back?). They are not the reality about which they speak. Rather, they enable us to move from our present conception or experience of it to another. Such a shift can be a disturbing experience. Quoting Amos Wilder,⁷ Paul Minear writes that the symbols touch, “that level of experience...where man is made and unmade, where the world is shaped and

reshaped, where the bondage of necessity or social and psychological patterns is dissolved."⁸ Of their particular usefulness, Minear writes, "In every generation the use and re-use of the Biblical images has been one path by which the church has tried to learn what the church truly is, so that it could become what it is not. For evoking this kind of self-knowledge, images may be more effective than formal dogmatic assertions. This may well be why the New Testament did not legislate any particular definition of the Church and why Christian theology has never agreed upon any such definition."⁹

7. Furthermore, we have to ask how much of the metaphor is essential and how much of it is penumbral? It used to be (until the end of the nineteenth century) that each detail of a parable was thought to correspond to a point whose message was equally meaningful and authoritative. Then Adolf Juelicher convinced several generations of scholars that there was only one central point to be made and sought.¹⁰ Thus, in the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), one is not to deduce that God is corrupt but that, on analogy, he will hear the case (the "prayer") of the persistent petitioner. In recent years, several scholars have rightly dared to challenge an overly-mechanical application of Juelicher's fundamental insight.¹¹ Yet, the main point still stands. So it is with more complex analogies such as metaphors. We may have to distinguish the primary vision which the core of the image promotes from penumbral, optical distortions which adhere. In other words, the idea of household does not stand or fall with the presence or absence of servitude from slaves. Nor does such an image of the Church require that women be excluded from leadership roles. In this way, one can avoid the "battle of the proof-texts" approach, whereby an opponent's scriptural backing / bashing can be countered by another, equally as authoritative (and damaging).

8. Imagistic language is flexible in other ways. The same metaphor can have positive and negative applications. For example, government can function under God (Romans 13) or under the Devil and his henchpersons (Revelation 13). The Temple can realize its purpose as a house of prayer for all the nations, or it may degenerate into a den of thieves (Mark 11). Families may be either healthy or "dysfunctional" (a word whose usefulness (functionality) is nearing extinction). Because Jesus' own relatives regarded him mad and requiring isolation (Mark 3:21), he redefined his family along other lines: those who do the will of God (vv 31-35). However, by this appeal to the flexibility of language, I am not suggesting that exegesis of the specifics is no longer important for hermeneutics. Nor am I proposing that the Prologue to St. John's Gospel should read, "In the beginning was the metaphor." Rather, I am calling for an exegesis (and hermeneutic) of the reigning metaphors or images. What is their role in the communicative and interpretive task? in doctrine?

So far as organization is concerned, I shall move in two stages: Part II will explore the dominating image of the Church in each letter, demonstrating how each vision controls or governs several categories. In Part III, I shall attempt to show how each NT paradigm and its constituent parts might function as mirrors of contemporary church life, at least on the American scene.

II. IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians, body imagery prevails, especially in chap. 12 where Paul attempts to prevent both uniformity and disunity resulting from a misunderstanding and misappropri-

ation of spiritual gifts. This problem is but a variant, perhaps the most serious one (requiring three chapters of attention), of the difficulty announced as early as 1:10. So the Apostle appeals for the charismata to bring about unity from diversity. However, my main concern is not to repeat that common observation but to concentrate on the character of the body language. Of the 114 instances of *swma* in the NT, 46 occur in 1 Corinthians in various senses. None ever appears in the Pastorals. The usages salient for my purpose are these: "just as the body is one and has many parts..., thus also Christ. For we all were also baptized into one body by one Spirit... (vv 12-13). Rather than join the debate over every contested point here, I shall concentrate on the character of the image.¹² This language suggests inter-relation with Christ (however defined) and with others so joined with him, such that what affects a part, affects the whole (3:17; 5:5, 6, 9-13; esp. 12:26). The picture of the Church which emerges is that of a collective, intimate, organic, integrative, dynamic entity.

In 1 Tim 3:15, the Pastor regards the Church as "the house (hold) of God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth."¹³ No such sense occurs in 1 Corinthians.¹⁴ This determinative reference is reinforced in vv 4, 5, and 12, where leaders, unable to "rule" at home, will hardly be successful in this role in the Church. To appreciate the full impact of "house(hold)," we must not think of a modern, single-family dwelling inhabited by two parents and one and three quarter children (mistakenly called "traditional" by careless politicians and churchpeople). Wayne Meeks observes that "the household was much broader than the family in modern Western societies, including not only immediate relatives but also slaves, freedmen, hired workers, and sometimes tenants and partners in trade or craft."¹⁵ All of this needed to be organized and administered as a veritable institution requiring structure, order, and efficiency. A premium would be put on preserving and protecting life and property. "The structure of the *oikos* was hierarchical, and contemporary political and moral thought regarded the structure of superior and inferior roles as basic to the well-being of the whole society."¹⁶

"Pillar and bulwark of the truth" extends the image in the direction of the cultus: the "house of God," i.e. the Temple (or a pagan shrine). Here, too, the religious image suggests something more than a place where God and people meet: orders of priests, rotations of service, supply of sacrificial offerings, furniture, paraphernalia, and the oversight required to make everything work. Stability and propriety, conserving of tradition, and the passing on of sound teaching belong quite naturally to such an environment. More can be said under this heading, but I shall reserve pressing the point further for the categories that follow. It is enough to observe that we have before us the differences which exist between an organism and an organization.¹⁷

Christology

The prevailing image of the Church in Corinthians has its roots in a particular Christology, which branches out in several directions. This appears most specifically at 15:20-22, especially in the "in Adam" - "in Christ" contrast, where each is viewed as a corporate or at least representative figure. The fundamental issue is that Paul uses the language of organic, 'personal' connection between Christ and both individual Christians and their life together as a body. Clowney points out that "The key to Paul's use of the metaphor 'body

of Christ' lies in this representative principle as it is applied to the *literal* body of Christ. He...refers to Christ's physical body when he says...Whoever partakes of the sacrament unworthily is 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' (1 Cor 11:27). Here the crucified body is in view."¹⁸ Subsequently, the Apostle takes the imagery further: "For you lemphaticl are [the] body of Christ and individually members lof it" (v 27. See 10:16-17). Earlier, he had argued that the reason that Christians may not unite physically with prostitutes is that their bodies (here, individually) are members of Christ (6:15). Sexual ethics are grounded, not in an idea about Christ, but in one's union with Him, however that might actually occur. Once again, there is a sense of intimate relationship and "organic" connection.

In 1 Timothy, the relation between Christ and believer is more formal and remote. The creed or hymn of 3:16 emphasizes several revelatory moments of salvation history—all "public" and none of them directly touching the Church's experience of him. Earlier, Christ Jesus is portrayed (2:5-6) as the man who mediates between God and humankind. He spans the gap. But mediation, while suggesting a certain kind of resultant proximity (he mediates as a human for humans),¹⁹ does not necessarily mean intimacy.²⁰ The soteriology of ransom for many suggests substitution or exchange rather than incorporation. In chap. 6, the author lays a different Christological groundwork for ethics. The foundation is not the current, mystical union with the risen Christ. Rather, Timothy is to fight the good fight and run the race by looking *back* to the good confession which Jesus made before Pontius Pilate (v 13) and by looking *forward* to the "appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 14). Instead of proximity, there is remoteness. (Once again, I must remind the reader that I am not making a value judgment here.)

(The) Faith and Truth

Likewise, the language of faith matches the ecclesial and Christological images just reviewed. So, the accent in 1 Corinthians falls on faith's subjective dimension. In general, Christian faith is not to be defined in terms of human wisdom but according to the Spirit and power of God (2:5). That same Spirit grants a special exercise of faith (12:9). But faith capable of moving mountains means nothing without love (13:2), which is superior to all (v 13). Yet, there are objective grounds for this subjective response. Empty is the Corinthians' faith (and so is the apostolic preaching) if Jesus did not rise from the dead (15:14, 17). Of course, such an emphasis is not lacking in 1 Timothy (e.g., 1: 5, 14, 19; 2:7, 15). However, dominating this letter is the articular "the" faith, a reference to a body of doctrine, of teaching (3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10,12, 21). In fact, the two expressions (τησ πιστεωσ και της καλησ διδασκαλιασ) appear together at 4:6 (See v 1). The preservation and transmission of teaching (also specified in some cases as "sound" or "healthy") dominates the letter (1:10; 4:1, 6, 13; 5:17; 6:1, 3). Furthermore, the role of teaching looms large here, too. Thus, besides calling himself a preacher and apostle, Paul early on (2:7) claims to be a "teacher [διδασκαλοσ] of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (or, "a faithful and true teacher"?). Although women are not permitted this role (v 11), teaching (διδασκειν) is incumbent upon the young Pastor (4:11, 6:2) and a qualification for the bishop who must be διδασκικοσ (3:2).

Of course, these activities are to be found in 1 Corinthians; but they bear a different nuance, a sense governed by the dominant vision. Διδασκικοσ is not so much a quali-

cation as it is a spiritual endowment (2:13, twice). The Spirit grants to the body the charism of teachers (12:28, third in the list), though not all teach (the Greek grammar requires a negative response to Paul's questions in v 29). In a more general sense, Paul (and even nature itself) teaches (4:17, 11:14, 14:6). And the Corinthians themselves may introduce into Christian worship a psalm, a teaching, revelation, tongue, and interpretation (14:26). Finally, in the pastoral letter, faith and teaching are grounded in the truth (2:7, 4:3. See 2:4, 6:5). All of this corresponds naturally to an understanding of the Church in 3:15 as both the "house" of God and the "support and pillar of the truth." (Not surprisingly, what follows in v 16 bears the marks of a creed or confession about the "mystery of godliness" or "piety".) The point is not that such formality is lacking entirely in 1 Corinthians (See 5:8 and 13:6). Paul can be very conscious about the reception and transmission of traditions (11:2, 23; 15:3). However, the communication of revelation both through him (as a bearer of a "word from the Lord" in chap. 7) and through the Spirit is much more direct and *ad hoc* and in keeping with the body language of this letter.

The Spirit

Next to Christology, perhaps the closest link with the image of the Church as body is with Paul's claims about the Spirit's role. It is He who enables one to confess Jesus' lordship (12:3), in whose body believers are discrete members (v 27). Each of the Spirit's individual and varied gifts is designed to function for the common good (v 7 and much of chap. 14's argument about the relative value of the gifts of prophecy and tongues speaking). Throughout the discussion, there is constant oscillation between the diversity of the charismata and the unity of the Spirit, who apportions them as he wills (vv 8-11. See vv 4-6 for the "proto-Trinitarian" origins (the same Spirit, Lord, and God) for the varieties of gifts, service, and working). In the middle of Paul's development of the body imagery, the link with Spirit is most clear at v 13: "by the one Spirit, we were all baptized into the one body and were made to drink of the one Spirit."

In 1 Timothy, the differences in conception and operation are not simply numerical. The nineteen instances in 1 Corinthians do quantitatively overshadow the two references here. However, most notable is the distinct focus which complements the categories examined thus far in this letter. The creed of 3:16 opens with the declaration that God (Θεος) or "he" (ος) was manifested (εφανερωθη) in (the) flesh. He was justified in or by (the) Spirit (εδικαιωθη εν πνευματι). This statement, reminiscent of another document connected with Ephesus, seems to say that the Spirit argued that Jesus was in the right, was vindicated (See also John 16:8,10). Here, too, the connection between Christology and Pneumatology is clear; but it proceeds along other lines. Furthermore, the teaching is encoded or at least formalized in a poetic/hymnic pattern. It belongs to a confession of commonly-held truth. The only other mention of the Spirit's role follows immediately and reflects a similar motif (4:1): "And the Spirit says specifically (ρητωσ) that in subsequent times some will desert from the faith understood as a body of doctrine which the Church as pillar of the truth is to preserve and give their minds to misleading spirits and demonic teachings." This is followed by a brief but condensed summary of their content (vv 2-5). Then the Pastor exhorts his younger colleague how to combat their influence (vv 6-16). Thus, the Spirit functions as the revealer of truth about future (and perhaps

imminent) threats to the integrity of the Church, via onslaughts against its doctrines. Again, the nature of the Spirit's role corresponds to the image of the Church as the pillar of the truth. Pneumatology and ecclesiology walk hand in hand.

Leadership

It should come as no surprise, given the controlling images and the observations about (the) faith, teaching, and Spirit, that concepts of leadership should follow suit. God-appointed (or placed, *ἔθετο*) Spirit-gifted apostles, prophets, teachers, and governors should lead the body of Christ (12:28, 31). But these appear to be leaders of the Church universal. There do not seem to be "officers" of the community at Corinth *per se*. Chloe's circle reports dissension to Paul (1:10-11); but it is not certain that they themselves are members of the Corinthian church.²¹ None of the principals (Apollon, Cephas, and Paul himself), around whom "cults of personality" have grown are in town at the time (v 12). Who orders the prayers and prophesying by men and women (11:1-15)? No one seems to preside over the chaotic eucharist (11:16-34). Is anyone heading up the worship encouraged in 14:26-34? Through whom does the church write its inquiries to the Apostle? Whatever leadership there is seems entirely *ad hoc* and remains completely in the background.²² However, there does seem to be a steady stream of emissaries from Paul, including Timothy (4:17; 16:10, 12, 15-18). The body at Corinth does not have a head. An egalitarian spirit prevails, even though some kind of hierarchy cannot be ruled out.

It seems quite natural, then, that "the household of God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth" (see above) should require specifically-qualified leaders rather than "gifted" persons. *Aspiration* to fill the office of a bishop (*ἐπισκοπῆς*) is noble. Among other things (3:1-7), one must be a good teacher (v 2) and manage (*προϊστηναί*) his own children and household. Otherwise, he will not be able to care for (*ἐπιμελουσθαί*) God's Church (vv 4-5). A similar set of standards is to be applied to deacons (vv 8-13), who must likewise be grounded in the truth (v 9) and able to manage their children and households as experience for an analogous role in the Church (vv 12-13). This phenomenon is not so much a matter of later development as it is a function of sociology and theology, as the community at Qumran should ever remind us. Timothy himself, urged to be a good minister (*διδάκονος*) of Jesus Christ, must maintain certain standards of character and performance (4:6, 11-16), of which teaching has a prominent place (vv 6, 11, 13, 16). He has been granted a gift (*χαρίσμα*) through prophecy (words more prominent in 1 Corinthians) when the council of elders (*πρεβυτεριον*) laid hands on him (v 15). Paul's further instructions regarding Timothy's disposition towards other elders reinforces what was said earlier about their role as teachers (5:17).

Class

Lacking qualified leaders at Corinth may in part, at least, be a function of class. Not many in that body were wise as defined by "fleshly" standards, not many were powerful or nobly-born (*ευγενεῖς*). In their case, God had chosen the foolish (*τα μωρα*), weak, low-born, and rejected elements of the world in order to confound their opposites (1:26-28).²³ Did any own slaves? Although householders *may* have done so, it is only a possibility.²⁴ That there were slaves among Christians at Corinth is clear from 7:21-22; but there is no way of telling

here how many, if any, belonged to Christian households. More clear is 12:13: in stressing that the many have become one through the Spirit, Paul supplies “whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.” Fee notes, “As in 7:17-24, these terms express the two basic distinctions that separated people in that culture—race/religion and social status.”²⁵ What is clear is that there does not seem to be enough of a problem between Christian master and slave to call much attention to the nature of their social and spiritual relationships.

How different is the situation in 1 Timothy. Determining the socio-economic conditions does not require detective-like assembling of circumstantial evidence. Women were rich enough to afford elaborate gold-leaf hair pieces (2:9). Before becoming widowed, some were financially able to provide relief to the afflicted (5:10). The church at Ephesus was economically sound enough to support widows, although their number had begun to drain resources, such that “real” widows needed to be distinguished from those young enough to remarry (5:3-16). Masters were numerous enough to require advice for their treatment of slaves. And both needed instruction about their attitudes towards one another (6:1-2). Affluent members existed in sufficient numbers and influence to need exhortation twice regarding both the evils of money and its potential for good (6:7-10, 17-19).

Eschatology & Relation to the World

Will members of an organism relate differently to the world and its future than those belonging to an organization? An answer can only be inferred. The slogan, “you can’t take it with you,” has its biblical roots at 1 Tim 6:7: “we brought nothing into the world and lit is certain that we cannot take anything out of the world.” The point here is that the Pastor does not appeal to the imminent end of all things as the rationale. It is the end of one’s physical life, not the end of the age which should cause one to be free of wealth. This is in keeping with prayer for the general population and for political authorities (kings and all who are in power) so that “we may lead a quiet and peaceable life” (2:2). In other words, there is a sense of legitimate accommodation in a world whose imminent end is not in sight. Indeed, the author refers in 4:1 to the Spirit’s clear warning about apostasy in later times (ὁστέρησις [not ἐσχάτοις] καιροῖς). But not much more is made of this, either here or elsewhere in the letter. How different the scene in Corinth. Apparently there are some (though not many) in this body who are able to buy goods (ἀγοραῶσθαι) and deal (χρᾶσθαι) with the world (7:31-32). Yet, they are to live free of acquisitions and connections in view of the present circumstance, variously described as the impending distress, the shortening of the appointed time, and passing away of this world’s form (vv 26, 29, 31).

Women (and Men)

Might it be that images of the Church at Corinth and Ephesus have an effect on the status and role of women in these churches? Could an analogous, interlocking influence be at work here, too? The Corinthian context is public worship and the exercise by both sexes of prayer and prophecy (11:5), which heads the list of spiritual gifts (14:1). Of all the charismata, prophecy has the special value of building up the Church (vv 3-5, 12), two chapters before being imaged as a body (See esp. 12:23-24, 27-31). What is often overlooked in the intricate discussion about the need for women to be covered during the prophetic act is that, although it signals inferiority, the covering is an egalitarian device.

In other words, the “veil” confers **authority** (ἐξουσία, read the best texts at v 10) upon women to participate equally with men in speaking a word from God to the congregation. And, although Paul begins his argument with a hierarchical, and hence vertical, “chain of command” model of authority (God-[head of!] Christ-man-woman) and the chronological priority of the male in creation (vv 3, 8), he switches to a more lateral and organic one. “Nevertheless woman is not apart from man, nor is man apart from woman in the Lord” (v 11). Furthermore, the procreative process reverses the original created order: “For just as the woman came from the man, so also man comes through woman; and all things come from God” (v 12).²⁶

Of course, the Pastor in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 does not make room for such a reversal in the order of creation which gives Adam priority over Eve. Nor does Paul in 1 Corinthians link any subordinationist language with her being the first to transgress. It appears to be a different world, a different mindset not to be explained away by recourse to different authors or to an earlier (allegedly better) and later (allegedly worse) development (known by the grossly-simplistic category, “early catholicism”). The canonical approach rules out preferential treatment, whether the criterion for doing so is historical, authorial, or doctrinal.

Instead, one must proceed along two contextual lines, one more narrow and the other more broad. More narrowly speaking, it is necessary to be as precise as possible about what Paul is or is not saying in the immediate context. One has only to examine the renderings among modern translations of ἀυθεντεῖν in v 12 (“to domineer”? “have authority”? or of σωζειν (“save”, “kept safe”, “restore”?) and of ἐν τῇ τεκνογονίᾳ (“in the act of childbearing”, “in the birth of the Child”?) and various permutations of these to see that the sense here is not as straightforward as it seems at first reading.²⁷

So far as the broader issue is concerned, one must ever keep in mind that the author’s attitude towards women belongs to the controlling image of the letter which we have seen to be a more organizational, institutional, formal, and hence traditional one. The accent is upon regularity, preservation, conservation, and established authorities. Political and social stability is reinforced by prayer for leaders and by the maintenance of slavery, albeit on a different plain. The real threat is ideological. This increases the tendency to guard, protect, and transmit the truth to the next generation. So, not surprisingly, political, social, ecclesiastical, and familial hierarchy are firmly in place at the church in Ephesus.

III CANONICAL CONVERSATION

Unfortunately, the canon does not itself explicitly suggest the canons which should be applied in the interpretation of these macroscopic images and their component parts. However, one could at least posit (given the confirmatory and critical functions of Scripture elsewhere) that each model and its components were intended both to support its own view of the Church and to help prevent extreme and exclusive appropriation of the other.²⁸

Were one to search for “dynamic equivalents” in our American ecclesiastical context, one might tentatively suggest that the Corinthian paradigm has supported the Church’s life as manifested in the Pentecostal and “holiness” traditions. Using very broad strokes for the sake of argument, I suggest that these have exhibited a more intimate Christology,

subjective faith, and charismatic Pneumatology. Personal experience and right living have been deemed more important than right doctrine. The congregation's "body life" has been such as to welcome the marginalized of society and to be supported by the "blue collar" worker. Its leadership has tended to be authorized by "giftedness" rather than by formal qualification. Few had advanced education. Fewer still enjoyed the luxury of full-time, salaried positions. Women often found opportunities for leadership, even "ordination." Until recently, its eschatology has been more imminent (pre-millennial among Pentecostal, primarily post-millennial among Wesleyan groups). A corresponding attitude to the world has generally emphasized withdrawal from political involvement and social reform by governmental programs. Of course, the rescue of souls from societal evils, such as prostitution, drink and gambling, was deemed appropriate from the start. The Church as a vital, living organism (a body) bursting with energy and vitality has been characteristic of worship in congregations arising out of this tradition.

A more "Ephesian" model has tended to undergird the mainline Reformed and sacramentarian traditions. Doctrinal purity, confessional assent, and liturgical integrity have been dominant concerns. An educated, qualified (and often specialized) clergy has not only maintained vigilance to defend against outside threats, it has also passed on the tradition to subsequent generations through a formal catechetical process which led to confirmation and extended into adulthood. Until very recently, the Church's operations have been supervised by men rather than by women. The Spirit has been seen as operative in and through the collective rather than through individual inspiration. Congregations have served middle and upper classes whose success in the world of politics and business indicated a coming to terms with the institutions of modern life. In fact, the church itself has functioned as an organization—albeit of a different sort. Although "this world was not their home" in the absolute sense, churches have thrived on the stability, regularity, and tacit support of the society in which they found themselves.

However, these pure types (or their approximations) tend not to exist as such anymore. Each has leavened the other. Charismatic renewal bearing certain "Corinthian" features (including more participation of women in leadership roles) has manifested itself in mainstream Protestant denominations and in the Roman Catholic Church, although no significant inroads have occurred in Eastern Orthodoxy, to my knowledge. Worship that has been regarded as formal at best and moribund at worst has come alive. Mainline churches have taken up (and sometimes taken over) the causes of the excluded and oppressed. "Born again" language can be heard across the traditions. Likewise, a "Timothean" influence has appeared among Pentecostal and Assemblies groups where economic success has enabled and demanded a more formally-educated clergy and has encouraged at least an openness to liturgical renewal. There has come a recognition that structure need not squelch vitality, that what often appeared to be "free" worship contained its own, sometimes rigid, strictures.

Such cross-fertilization has helped and continues helping to keep the "down-side" of each model from gaining ascendancy. Not all growth is healthy. Uncontrolled and without direction, it can produce cancer. Change is good until moorings with the past are cut in search of a rather fuzzy future whose realization lacks both maps and methods. The desire for stability can cloak an underlying rigidity which refuses to consider a reasoned

and documented strategy for change. Although unintended, quenching the Spirit sometimes results. These sensibilities emerge when an interpreter treats the texts as both preserving something at once extremely vital and profoundly vulnerable to abuse. So, by reading each in this fashion, faith could be kept from being both mindless, on the one hand and frozen into dogma on the other. Reading both texts thus might prevent intimacy with Christ from becoming familiarity, at one extreme, loftiness from turning to remoteness at the other. 1 Timothy would keep women's liberty (εξουσία) from dissolving into demagoguery (αυθεντειν), while 1 Corinthians could be appealed to when orderliness is in danger of being a means of oppression.²⁹

Whichever the direction of the application, the interpreter must become an astute observer of all of the dynamics of the situation. Besides becoming as fully informed as possible, s/he must avoid settling into an unyielding, disloyal, unloving opposition which can easily become diabolical in its divisiveness *ἰδιαβαλλειν*, "throw through," so as to separate. Dialectic is the key. As the etymology suggests, it requires constant conversation between the parties, neither of whom is dispensable. What cannot be done without is thorough knowledge of the disputant's point of view. Although my loyalty is to the Other Place, I must relate the report by Professor Billy Abraham of a tradition at Oxford (which I dearly love) that one has to be able to defend the position of one's opponents more ably than they themselves could before being allowed to criticize them.

What may we conclude from this exercise? First, individual themes in these very different documents can be integrated around a dominant image of the Church. It remains to be seen whether or not analogous instances can be found elsewhere. It may well be that particular views of God or Christ (or some other category) will be the unifying elements. Second, I have attempted to provide a sample of how two different ("opposing") voices within Scripture might function in a more fully-blown capacity to address the entire people of God with "the whole counsel of God" in very different circumstances. If these tentative proposals even so much as point in the right direction (being themselves treasure in breakable clay pots, 2 Cor 4:17), then we may be going a step farther along the road of practicing the claim that "all scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that God's person may be perfect i.e. 'complete', thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16).

NOTES

* I have focused my attention mainly upon secondary literature which helps to develop what I believe to be a novel two-part thesis.

1. The most comprehensive treatment in English of variety in the Early Church's thought and life is still J. D. G. Dunn's *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977). Despite the promise of the title, there is little demonstration of fundamental unity. See n. 3, below.

2. Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), p. 22.

3. I have attempted to demonstrate that, alongside the diversity, there lies a unifying, kerygmic center. See my "The Unifying Kerygma of the New Testament," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 (1988): 3-17 and 38 (1990): 3-11. Both articles were combined in an appendix

of the same title in my book, *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels* (SNTSMS 68; Cambridge: the University Press, 1991).

4. Minear, *Images*, p. 24, declares about any primary community, "Its self-understanding, its inner cohesion, its *esprit de corps*, derive from a dominant image of itself, even though that image remains inarticulately imbedded in subconscious strata."

5. Other attempts to do the same with various paradigms appear in Robert W. Wall and Eugene E. Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon. A Reader in Canonical Criticism* (SNTSS 76; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1992).

6. Furthermore, the history which is sometimes reconstructed is poorly done. Simplistic linear models of development cannot be supported by the data. For example, it is a commonplace to assert that earliest Christianity was of the apocalyptic, other-worldly variety whose egalitarian and informal character later became doctrinaire, hierarchical, and accommodating to the world. Yet, except for J. A. T. Robinson, mainstream experts, both "conservative" and "liberal," regularly date Revelation in the 90s of our era. However, here is a late apocalyptic work neither presupposing nor advocating any specific kind of organization or leadership. On the other hand, the Qumran sectarians manifest an even earlier apocalyptic outlook whose exponents lived in a highly structured society headed by a stratified leadership. Often, it is overlooked that Judaism, the matrix out of which Christianity emerged, was itself simultaneously capable of embracing Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes, each with its own social and political characteristics. Both Judaism and Christianity *did* develop. But they did not do so at a single rate or in a straight line. The image of a great watershed, with many tributaries and tidal influences, describes the situation better than that of a single river. For fuller arguments and secondary literature see my study, "Ephesus and the New Testament Canon," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 69 (1986): 210-234 and reprinted as chap. 14 in Wall and Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon*, n. 5 above.

7. Amos Wilder, *New Testament Faith for Today* (New York, NY: Harper, 1955), p. 93.

8. Minear, *Images*, pp. 24-25.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

10. Adolf Juelicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* 2 vols (2nd ed.; Tuebingen: Mohr, 1899, 1910).

11. R. E. Brown, "Parable and Allegory Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1962): 36-45 and C. F. D. Moule, "Mark 4:1-20 Yet Once More," *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), pp. 95-96.

Minear, *Images*, pp. 222-223, observes that "through all the analogies the New Testament writers were speaking of a single reality, a single realm of activity, a single magnitude. The purpose of every comparison is to point beyond itself. The greater the number of comparisons, the greater number of pointers. When so many pointers impel our eyes to look in one direction, our comprehension of the magnitude of what lies in that direction is enhanced. This is why in the New Testament we observe no sentimental fascination for the images themselves, such as a preacher or a poet feels for a symbol of his own devising. The overarching interest is that reality toward which all point." There is much to agree with here. I would only add that symbols not only point to the reality, they also connect us with it. Otherwise, why does one get so involved (whichever way it goes) with the desecration of images (such as the flag and the cross)? Furthermore, biblical images do not only point towards the Reality; they also "compete" with one another in a "monotheizing" way by relativizing one another.

12. Given the limited scope of this essay, it is not necessary to join the debate over the nature of the particular relation to Christ: whether Christians are the only body that Christ has, as J. A. T. Robinson maintained in *The Body. A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 1/5; London: SCM, 1952), p. 51 or whether it is another kind of body of which they are part: "an ecclesiastical Body, consisting of believers, in which he dwells on earth through his Spirit", as R. H. Gundry argues in *SOMA in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (SNTSMS 29; Cambridge: University Press,

1976), p. 228.

13. George W. Knight III notes that “even though building terminology is utilized (στυλος and εδραιωμα), since the conduct in view relates to the interaction of the members of God’s family, modern translations have opted for ‘household’ (RSV, NASB, NEB, NIV).” See his *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 180.

14. All six references to οικος or οικια are confined to individuals’ homes or households (1:16; 11:22, 34; 14:35; 16:15, 19). Οικοδομειν and οικοδομη occur merely as terms of growth by way of construction.

15. Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1983), p. 76.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

17. Edmund P. Clowney, “Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church. A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology,” in *Biblical Interpretation of the Church. Text and Context* (ed. D. A. Carson; Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), p. 98.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

19. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 21.

20. There is a certain discordancy in some forensic and cultic portrayals of Christ’s mediation, where the pleading Son finally convinces a reluctant, frowning Father to forgive the ransomed sinner. While not an exact parallel, there are some interesting analogies within the canon of Wesley’s hymns. I have in mind the deeply intimate and incorporative cast of “And Can It Be?” (“alive in him my living Head”) and the more removed, predominantly juridical flavor of “Arise my Soul Arise” (“five bleeding wounds He bears” which “pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me”). Of course, the language of adoption in the last verse changes the imagery from God as Judge to Father.

21. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), pp. 92-93.

22. Although Stephanus managed a household and Gaius and Crispus might have been prominent persons outside of the Christian circle (Theissen, *ibid.*, pp. 73-96), this says nothing illuminating about their place in the congregation and their role in the correspondence. Theissen (*ibid.*, pp. 94-95) places too much weight on sixteen named persons (culled from Acts, Romans, and 1 Corinthians), despite his own admission that “it is not always certain that those named come from Corinth.” [!]

23. Although Theissen (*ibid.*, pp. 72-73) correctly points out that a minority of powerful persons can nevertheless exercise an influence disproportionate to their numbers, this is not the same as showing that they did in this case.

24. After reading between the lines, mining other genuine pauline literature, and making generous use of Acts without any justification, Theissen concludes that Christian households at Corinth very likely included slaves (*ibid.*, pp. 85-87). While the possibility cannot be denied, one needs to make a case for probability.

25. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 606.

26. According to Fee (*ibid.*, pp. 699-708), Paul’s alleged absolute prohibition of women speaking in church belongs to an early scribal interpolation. After a thorough examination of linguistic and manuscript evidence for 14:34-35, he comes to the view that “in keeping with the textual questions, the exegesis of the text itself leads to the conclusion that it is not authentic.”

27. See the thorough (and courageous) examination of 2:15 by Stanley E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 87-102.

28. Clowney, *Biblical Models*, p. 105 sees the problem in these terms: “So long as one metaphor is isolated and made a model, men are free to tailor the church to their errors and prejudices.” Its solution lies in recognizing that “the interpreter carries a particular responsibility to present those

metaphors that may be misunderstood or found offensive. Only this way can balance be gained, and only in this way can the misinterpretation of favourite models be avoided" (Ibid.). What Clowney does not point out is that there are signs in the Canon itself that legitimate such a role (viz. the multiple gospel tradition, and the overall diversity of Scripture).

29. If such appropriation of biblical imagery is to be useful, the point is not to correct and balance each of the categories studied item-for-item. This would lead to anomalous results: how could the view of slaves in 1 Timothy correct the apparently more egalitarian model in 1 Corinthians without suppressing liberation altogether? The answer lies in being ready to employ the full range of biblical paradigms which touch on the question of slaves' status and role in the community. So, the dynamics of Onesimus' return to the "household" of Philemon would need to be brought into a comprehensive canonical treatment, of which this study is only a discrete sample.